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Green, Samuel A. Jr.

Some Indian names.



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SOME INDIAN NAMES.

AT a meeting of the MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL SOCIETY, on Thursday, May 9, 1889, Dr. SAMUEL A. GREEN made the following remarks on certain geographical names of Indian origin:—

The Reverend John Wilson, first minister of Boston, owned two large tracts of land in what is now Merrimack, New Hampshire, but which then came within the limits of Massachusetts. They contained, both together, one thousand acres; and Mr. Wilson's title was confirmed by the General Court, at a session beginning on October 16, 1660. A grant was made to him during the summer of 1639, more than twenty years previously; but, owing to "seuerall disappointments," the land had been neither surveyed nor selected.

In the Suffolk Registry of Deeds there is a record of the sale of this land, on December 3, 1660, to Simon Lynde, a merchant of Boston; and as the description of the property mentions three Indian names, of which two are still in use, I make the following extract from the deed, in order to show their antiquity and to prolong their continued application:—

one thousand acres of land bee it more or lesse scittuated lying & being about ten miles more or lesse from Groatten being laid out in

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two generall places (to witt) three hundred acres of meadow & vpland lying at or vpon pennechuck brooke peere South eggenocke Riuer bounded wth the wildernes & a pond lying towards the southwest Corner thereof and the bound tree marked wth the Letter L and seuen hundred acres of meadow & vpland and entervaille scittuat lying & being about one mile & halfe Distant from the aforementioned three hundred acres of land vpon Southheaganock Riuer aforesajd the Riuer Runing thr^o the Same and the place Called by the Indians Quo=qunna=pussackessa nay=noy bounded vpon the westward wth the land or farme of Cap^t w^m Dauis of Boston easterly :

(Suffolk Deeds, Liber III. page 449.)

Both Pennichuck Pond in Hollis, New Hampshire, and Pennichuck Brook, running from the pond into the Merrimack River and forming the boundary line between the city of Nashua and the town of Merrimack, keep one of these three names familiar to the present generation. "South eggenocke" and "Southheaganock" — different forms of the same word — represent another of these names, which is now known as "Souhegan" and applied to a well-known river in Hillsborough County, New Hampshire. The name "Quo=qunna=pussackessa nay=noy," as given in the deed, is written "quohquima=paskessa=nahnoy" in the General Court records; and these two forms of an Indian word are sufficiently similar to establish their identity. I am not aware that any trace of this name still survives in the geographical nomenclature of the neighborhood. The "pond lying towards the southwest Corner" of the first parcel of land mentioned in the deed, is Pennichuck Pond, and so called in the Colonial records.

Geographical names of Indian origin furnish now one of the few links in New England that connect modern times with the prehistoric period. In the absence of any correct

standard either of pronunciation or spelling, which always characterizes an unwritten language, these words have been greatly distorted and changed, and thus have lost much of their original meaning, but their root generally remains. As the shards that lie scattered around the sites of old Indian dwellings are eagerly picked up by the archæologist for critical examination, so any fragmentary facts about the Indian names of places are worth saving by the antiquary and scholar for their historical and philological value.

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